

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 04365

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN PROPOSAL FOR MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL
REFUGEE PROBLEMS

REF: BRUSSELS 05042

1. FOLLOWING UP ON SUGGESTION PARA 4 REFTEL, MISOFF
RAISED WITH BELGIAN REFUGEE AFFAIRS OFFICER JEAN DESY IN
COURSE OF ICEM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SESSION DESY'S EXPRES-
SED THOUGHTS CONCERNING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN EUROPE,
AND THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS OF REFUGEE-RELATED INTER-
NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

2. DESY DID NOT DWELL LONG UPON THE FIRST POINT OTHER
THAN TO CONFIRM HIS VIEW, AS REPORTED REFTEL, THAT IT IS
BECOMMING DIFFICULT FOR OFFICES SUCH AS HIS OWN TO EXPLAIN
TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS WHY FUNDS PROVIDED BY THEM FOR REFU-
GEE CARE AND RESETTLEMENT ARE NOT EMPLOYED FOR THIS PUR-
POSE WITHIN THEIR OWN AREAS, AND IN THIS CASE WITHIN
EUROPE. DESY ADDED THAT IT WAS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT
IN BELGIUM AT THIS TIME WITH A FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER
WHO WAS FAR LEFT OF CENTER, AND CAST A JAUNDICED EYE ON
FUNDS EXPENDED FOR REFUGEES IN GENERAL. BEYOND THE
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FOLLOWING PROPOSAL, HOWEVER, DESY OFFERED NO SUGGESTION
FOR RESOLVING THIS PROBLEM.

3. ON THE SECOND POINT, DESY, ALLUDING TO THE LACKLUSTER
ONGOING SESSION OF THE ICEM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (SEPTTEL)
SAID THAT AFTER 25 YEARS IN BEING, ICEM, AS WELL AS UNHCR,
NEEDED A THOROUGH REVAMPING, AND THAT THE ENTIRE MATTER

OF APPROACH TO REFUGEE PROBLEMS SHOULD BE EXAMINED WITH A FRESH EYE BY THE PRINCIPAL DONOR AND REFUGEE-RECEIVING NATIONS. HE FELT THAT, WITH THE NEW HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, THE CURRENT TIMING WAS RIGHT. AS FOR ICEM, THE ORGANIZATION HAD ATROPHIED, AND NEEDED A THOROUGH SHAKE-UP "FROM THE TOP DOWN". DESY THOUGHT THAT TO CONDUCT, OR AT LEAST TO LAUNCH SUCH A REVIEW, A MEETING OF HIGH LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES FROM COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRANCE, THE U.K., GERMANY, BELGIUM, HOLLAND, THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES, ITALY, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, AND THE UNITED STATES, SHOULD BE CONVENED AT AN EARLY DATE. HE SPECIFICALLY RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THESE COUNTRIES BEING REPRESENTED BY "BUREAUCRATS" LONG ASSOCIATED WITH REFUGEE WORK, SUCH AS HIMSELF, ALTHOUGH HE CONCEDED THAT THEIR COUNSEL, IN PERSON OR IN WRITING, MIGHT HAVE SOME VALUE. WHAT HE DESIRES IS A TOTALLY FRESH LOOK AT REFUGEE PROBLEMS WORLDWIDE, UNHAMPERED BY PAST EXPERIENCE AND CONNECTIONS. NOTING THE WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S EMPHASIS UPON HUMANITARIAN CAUSES, DESY FELT THAT THE PROPER SETTING FOR SUCH A GATHERING WOULD BE IN WASHINGTON. HE THOUGHT THAT THE AMBASSADORS TO THE UNITED STATES OF THE NATIONS CONCERNED MIGHT BE CALLED TOGETHER BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE, OR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, TO CONSIDER THE CURRENT STATUS OF REFUGEE MATTERS ON THE WORLD SCENE AND TO SUGGEST NEW APPROACHES TO CURRENT AND

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ANTICIPATED REFUGEE PROBLEMS, INCLUDING A SEARCHING LOOK AT EXISTING INTERNATIONAL BODIES WHICH DEAL WITH THEM.

4. DESY WAS INFORMED THAT HIS VIEWS WOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO WASHINGTON.

5. COMMENT: DESY'S THOUGHTS ON THIS SUBJECT ARE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IN VIEW OF BELGIUM'S LONG RECOGNIZED INTEREST IN AND STRONG SUPPORT OF REFUGEE ACTIVITIES (ICEM WAS ESTABLISHED AS A RESULT OF A RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY A MIGRATION CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS IN DECEMBER 1951), AND OF DESY'S PERSONAL CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS. HE IS THE ONLY CURRENT ACTIVE NATIONAL DELEGATE TO ICEM MEETINGS, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE FOUNDING SESSIONS. HIS CONCERN OVER THE CURRENT STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL TREATMENT OF REFUGEE MATTERS THEREFORE MERITS CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. END COMMENT.

VANDEN HEUVEL

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